

Contextual Analysis of Surah Al-Anfal Verse 17: Uncovering the Substantive Meaning of War and Its Implications in Contemporary Contexts

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Abstract

*The classical interpretation of the Qur'an has been the primary foundation for understanding the sacred text of Islam for centuries. However, in modern times, criticism has emerged of this approach from contextual commentators, who argue that the Qur'anic text should be understood dynamically, considering the context of the time and location where the revelation was revealed. This article examines the contextualization of Surah al-Anfal verse 17 concerning war through a historical-critical analysis, particularly regarding the *asbab al-nuzul* (the reason for the occurrence of the consequences). Second, this verse emphasizes that jihad is not limited to physical warfare but encompasses the struggle against injustice. Third, in the spiritual dimension, this verse teaches submission to God and awareness of God's will. This research recommends applying the ethical and spiritual principles in this verse to address the challenges facing Muslims today, such as justice and the protection of rights..*

Keywords: *Contextual Analysis, al-Anfal Verse 17, War, Implication, Contemporary.*

Abstrak

Penafsiran klasik Al-Qur'an telah menjadi landasan utama dalam memahami teks suci Islam selama berabad-abad. Namun, di zaman modern ini, muncul kritik terhadap pendekatan tersebut dari para mufasir kontekstual, yang berargumen bahwa teks Al-Qur'an seharusnya dipahami secara dinamis dengan mempertimbangkan konteks zaman dan lokasi wahyu diturunkan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kontekstualisasi Surah al-Anfal ayat 17 mengenai perang melalui analisis kritis historis, khususnya dalam aspek *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Dua pertanyaan utama yang diajukan adalah: bagaimana relevansi *asbāb al-nuzūl* Surah al-Anfal ayat 17 terhadap tafsir ayat, dan bagaimana pemaknaan perang dalam konteks kontemporer, baik secara konkret maupun transendental. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif-analitis, sesuai dengan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Surah al-Anfal ayat 17 menyimpan pesan multidimensi—mencakup aspek historis, sosial-politik, etis, dan transendental. Pertama, dari sudut pandang historis, ayat ini berakar pada Perang Badar sebagai respons defensif terhadap serangan Quraisy. *Kedua*, ayat ini menegaskan bahwa jihad tidak hanya terbatas pada peperangan fisik, tetapi juga mencakup perjuangan melawan ketidakadilan. *Ketiga*, dalam dimensi spiritual, ayat ini mengajarkan tawakkul dan kesadaran akan kehendak Ilahi. Rekomendasi dari penelitian ini adalah menerapkan prinsip etis dan spiritual yang terkandung dalam ayat ini untuk menghadapi tantangan yang dihadapi umat Islam saat ini, seperti keadilan dan perlindungan hak.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kontekstual, Surah al-Anfal Ayat 17, Perang, Implikasi, Kontemporer.

A. Introduction

The gradual revelation of the Qur'an is one of its greatest wisdoms, as it allowed the Divine message to be absorbed progressively by human limitations and societal needs. The verses were not revealed in abstraction but interacted directly with the early Muslim community's historical, political, and moral contexts. According to Shihab, this reflects the Qur'an's dynamic nature, where reality often preceded or accompanied the revelation. Hence, a proper understanding of the Qur'an across time requires a holistic approach that includes both textual analysis and contextual examination.¹ Rahmah emphasizes that limiting interpretation to the verbal-textual level without accounting for the underlying conditions at the time of revelation leads to a reductionist view that hinders the Qur'an's relevance in modern times.² Similarly, Arkoun argues that any hermeneutical engagement with the Qur'an must transcend literalism and embrace socio-historical consciousness to unlock its transformative potential.³

Recent empirical studies bolster this argument by demonstrating how contemporary Southeast Asian tafsir has integrated digital media, gender-inclusive hermeneutics, and maqāṣid-based frameworks to respond to societal challenges such as religious pluralism, environmental justice, and education reform.⁴ Additionally, Fitriyah & Rahman highlight that inclusive gender-based tafsir reconstruction, empowered by digital platforms, has successfully addressed patriarchal bias in traditional readings while advancing justice and egalitarian discourse.⁵ Furthermore, research by Bakhri & Taufiq demonstrates how maqāṣid-oriented hermeneutics have been employed to tackle environmental ethics and social welfare in the region.⁶ Together, these findings underscore that interpretative renewal must be responsive to textual tradition and to the digital, socio-political, and

¹ Umar Shihab, *Kontekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kajian Tematik Atas Ayat-Ayat Hukum Dalam Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Pena Madani, 2005), 22.

² Niswatur Rahmah, "Studi Analisis Kaidah Asbāb Al-Nuzūl: Kelebihan Dan Kekurangannya," *Al-Tadabur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2019): 145, <https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v4i02.467>.

³ Mohamed Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 143.

⁴ Ahmad Saefulloh, "Contextual Tafsir and Digital Islam in Southeast Asia: A Narrative Review" 2, no. 2 (2024): 112, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v2i2.603>.

⁵ Aidatul Fitriyah and Gohar Rahman, "Reinterpreting Gender in the Qur'an: Realizing Inclusive Interpretation in the Modern Era. An-Nisa Journal of Gender Studies," *An-Nisa Journal of Gender Studies* 17, no. 2 (2024): 120, <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i2.303>.

⁶ M. Bakhri and H. Taufiq, "Gender Justice in Modern Tafsir: A Southeast Asian Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Feminist Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 55.

ecological realities of Muslim societies today, ensuring that tafsir remains relevant and transformative.

Modern scholarship has increasingly questioned the adequacy of traditional Qur'anic interpretation methods in addressing contemporary issues. One core critique, especially from contextual mufasssirs, is the static or *ceteris paribus* assumption embedded in classical exegetical frameworks, which treat Qur'anic meaning as fixed irrespective of time and space.⁷ Though rigorous in linguistic and philological terms, these frameworks often lack adaptability to modern ethical dilemmas such as gender equity, interfaith relations, or ecological justice. Contextual interpreters assert that understanding the Qur'an demands consideration of the socio-historical realities at the time of revelation and must be extended to address current social and ethical challenges. Hasbiyallah notes that contextual approaches enable more dynamic and responsive interpretations that align with the lived experiences of Muslims today.⁸ Moreover, Faris Esack advocates for a liberationist reading of the Qur'an, which centers marginalized voices and prioritizes justice, compassion, and empowerment as core Islamic values.⁹

One key to contextual interpretation lies in the use of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), a discipline within *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* that links verses to specific historical incidents. This method helps trace the situational triggers that gave rise to the verses, offering insights into their intent and scope. Bakri asserts that mastering *asbāb al-nuzūl* is indispensable for understanding the Qur'an contextually.¹⁰ However, scholars such as Syahrur, quoted by Irma Riyani and Abdullah Saeed, caution against treating *sabab al-nuzūl* as exhaustive or definitive, since they are limited to narrated events and do not fully encompass the Qur'an's universal moral trajectory.^{11,12} Furthermore, the epistemic status of some reports is contested, given the diverse chains of transmission and interpretive interpolations from early exegetes. Instead, *asbāb al-nuzūl* should be used as a bridge—

⁷ M Thohar Al-abza, "Kritik Muḥammad Shahrūr Terhadap Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2012): 45, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v1i1.1320>.

⁸ Muhammad Hasbiyallah, "Paradigma Tafsir Kontekstual: Upaya Membumikan Nilai-Nilai Al-Qur'an," *Al-Dhikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 12, no. 1 (2018): 25, <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v12i2.2924>.

⁹ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997), 223.

¹⁰ Syamsul Bakri, "Asbāb Al-Nuzūl: Dialog Antara Teks Dan Realitas Kesejarahan," *At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2016): 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v1i1.30>.

¹¹ Irma Riyani and Yeni Huriani, "Reinterpretasi Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Bagi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2017): 118, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v2i1.863>.

¹² Abdullah Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an In The Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 110.

connecting the divine message with broader ethical imperatives across time, rather than as fixed boundaries that constrain moral reasoning.

Ilman argues that *asbāb al-nuzūl* should be reconceptualized not as definitive historical causes, but as heuristic instruments that facilitate reinterpretation and ethical application, shifting their function from static explanatory triggers to dynamic frameworks for moral reasoning.¹³ This reorientation is consistent with critiques that conceptualize *asbāb al-nuzūl* as transformative, serving as historical explanations and foundational elements for constructing normative and contemporary ethical contexts.¹⁴

This approach is exemplified in Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory, which advocates for two stages in interpretation: understanding the original socio-historical context of the text and then reapplying its normative values to contemporary circumstances.¹⁵ This method preserves the integrity of the Qur'an's ethical guidance while preventing rigid, ahistorical readings. In Rahman's framework, revelation is tied to specific past events and embodies moral universals that transcend those events. His model represents a fusion between fidelity to scripture and moral creativity, enabling reinterpretation without undermining divine authority. By applying this hermeneutic movement, modern exegetes are better equipped to derive relevant meanings from verses revealed during conflict, such as those concerning warfare, justice, and peace. Scholars like Ebrahim Moosa have expanded on this paradigm by integrating concepts from ethics, anthropology, and critical theory to enrich Qur'anic interpretation.¹⁶

A crucial example is Surah al-Anfal verse 17, which addresses divine involvement in the Battle of Badr: "You did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you did not throw [the dust], but it was Allah who threw it..." (Qur'an 8:17). While the verse is rooted in a specific historical event, it raises broader theological and ethical questions about agency, divine will, and the ethics of warfare, without knowledge of its contextual background—namely, the desperate circumstances of early Muslims during Badr—such verses risk misinterpretation, particularly when invoked to justify violence in contemporary settings. Hafizi stresses that understanding the historical situation allows interpreters to

¹³ Andi Mujahidil Ilman SM, "Peran Asbab Al-Nuzul Dalam Kontekstualisasi Ayat Al- Qur'an," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 26, no. 1 (2024): 110, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jumdpi.v26i1.43912>.

¹⁴ Almaydza Pratama Abnisa, "Posisi Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Perspektif Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur," *Tarqiyatuna* 2, no. 1 (2023): 65, <https://doi.org/10.36769/tarqiyatuna.v2i1.313>.

¹⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University Press, 1982), 98.

¹⁶ Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 176.

distinguish between verses offering situational instruction and those containing lasting ethical principles.¹⁷ Furthermore, scholars like Sherman Jackson urge caution against simplistic readings of scriptural violence, noting that a contextualized and purposive hermeneutic is essential to resist ideological exploitation.¹⁸

In this light, verses concerning warfare must be approached with nuance. Ilman points out that determining whether a verse conveys a specific ruling (*khāṣ*) or a general principle (*‘āmm*) is essential for discerning its relevance today.¹⁹ Qur’anic references to conflict, such as those in Surah al-Anfal, do not promote war for its own sake but aim to establish justice and protect the oppressed. Therefore, “battle” more accurately reflects the Qur’anic scope than the generic term “war.” The Qur’an regulates conduct during battle, emphasizing restraint, proportionality, and civilian protection—principles that resonate with modern humanitarian ethics and international law. The Prophet Muhammad’s conduct in war, characterized by mercy and restraint, further contextualizes such verses and underscores the moral boundaries of permissible conflict.²⁰ Thus, an ethical and contextual lens is essential for preserving the Qur’an’s message of peace and justice.

This article seeks to analyze Surah al-Anfal verse 17 using a historical-contextual approach. It aims to: (1) examine the verse through the lens of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and early Islamic history, notably the Battle of Badr; (2) apply Fazlur Rahman’s double movement hermeneutic to extract normative values; and (3) demonstrate how such an interpretation reveals universal ethical themes such as justice, peacebuilding, and responsible conflict engagement. In an era where Qur’anic verses about war are often misused or misunderstood, it is imperative to reclaim their ethical depth and contextual specificity. Only through such interpretative frameworks can the Qur’an’s message remain faithful to its origin and relevant to our present. Ultimately, the task of modern tafsir is to explain the past and ethically illuminate the present and future.

B. Research Method

¹⁷ Hafizi, “Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an (Aspek Sejarah Dan Kontekstual Penafsiran),” *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur’an Aan Al-Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2020): 52, <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v14i1.6047>.

¹⁸ Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2009), 88.

¹⁹ Andi Mujahidil Ilman SM, “Peran Asbab Al-Nuzul Dalam Kontekstualisasi Ayat Al- Qur’an,” 112.

²⁰ Shafiyurrahman Al Mubarakfuri, *Ar-Rahceq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar): Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), 145.

The method used in this study is a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, which involves collecting, organizing, and interpreting textual data to understand the contextual and substantive meaning of Surah al-Anfal verse 17. This method lets the researcher describe relevant concepts and themes narratively and critically analyze them to draw meaningful conclusions.²¹ This study is classified as library-based research, relying heavily on existing scholarly literature, articles, books, and previous studies that are thematically connected to the subject under investigation.²² By employing this method, the study aims to provide a descriptive overview of the topic and offer critical insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the theoretical framework and core issues being explored.

The data collection technique employed is documentary research, based on the library research model. Data are gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include classical tafsir works and the seminal work of Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. These sources are selected based on their authoritative status in Qur'anic interpretation, relevance to the theme of war, and contextual hermeneutics. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and credible scholarly publications that discuss the broader socio-political and ethical implications of war in Islam and the application of Rahman's double movement theory.

The study applies content analysis combined with hermeneutical interpretation, particularly Fazlur Rahman's double movement method for the data analysis technique. First, the historical and textual data are examined to identify key themes and contextual elements (*move from the present to the past*). Then, these findings are re-examined to extract normative principles that can be applied to contemporary settings (*move from the past to the present*). This analytical process ensures a comprehensive understanding of the verse's historical background, ethical implications, and relevance to modern-day issues.

C. Results and Discussion

²¹ A. Muri Yusuf, *Metode Penelitian: Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan Penelitian Gabungan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), 331.

²² Nafisah Zein et al., "Developing Morally Strong and Intellectually Capable Students: An Islamic Education Model In Senior High School," *J-MPI: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025): 21, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jmpi.v10i1.30780>.

Glimpse into Double Movement Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics originates from the Greek word *hermeneutics*, which means to interpret. From this word comes *hermeneia*, which is understood as an interpretation. In terms of terminology, as stated by Sumaryono, it is the act of revealing the content of a text as intended by its author.²³ Junaedi explains that in interpreting the Qur'an, hermeneutics is the science that describes how a word or an event from past times and cultures can be understood and meaningful in the present situation, involving methodological rules and epistemological assumptions applied in interpretation.²⁴ In his monumental work *Truth and Method*, Gadamer emphasizes that the process of understanding a text is never entirely objective or neutral, as it is always influenced by the reader's background, experiences, and expectations.²⁵ The concept of the "hermeneutic circle" illustrates that the meaning of a text is formed through a dialogue between its historical context and the reader's present horizon of understanding. In other words, understanding is not a one-way process but a reciprocal and evolving interaction. Thus, every interpretation is inherently open and contextual, rather than a fixed and absolute truth.

The double movement hermeneutic is a contextual interpretation method developed by a contemporary Pakistani scholar, Fazlur Rahman. His thoughts on the contextualization of Qur'anic verses stemmed from his desire to explore the eternal message of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, addressing various issues faced by the community at that time, whether in Mecca, Medina, or surrounding areas.²⁶ According to Rahman, the eternal nature of the Qur'an implies that the interpretation of its verses is flexible, adapting to the development of the times, allowing the meaning of the verses to be adopted from the first interpretation during the Prophet's era to the present day.²⁷ As quoted by Abdullah Saeed, a mufassir (Qur'anic interpreter) aiming to reveal the contextual meaning of a verse must understand the process of transferring meaning from the basic meaning by examining the historical aspect through the study of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) of the verse or surah, as well as the issues faced by the community at that time to which the

²³ Sumaryono, *Hermeneutika: Sebuah Metode Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999), 23.

²⁴ Didi Junaedi, "Menafsir Makna Jihad Dalam Konteks Kekinian," *Mau'izh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan* 11, no. 1 (2020): 8, <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v11i1.1203>.

²⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer dan Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2000), 166.

²⁶ Achmad Khudori Soleh, "Membandingkan Hermeneutika Dengan Ilmu Tafsir," *Tsaqafah* 7, no. 1 (2011): 45, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v7i1.106>.

²⁷ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 1-2.

Qur'an responded.²⁸ The next step is to generalize the obtained meaning to provide specific solutions to emerging problems within the community, thus finding universal moral-social principles while considering the socio-historical context when the verse was revealed. These general principles are then applied to the concrete context of contemporary life .

Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory was later theoretically extended by Abdullah Saeed, who considered it a critical, logical, and comprehensive interpretative method. By applying this method in seeking Qur'anic interpretations, one can find a systematic, contextual, and idealistic understanding, even though the obtained meaning may need "adjustment" to the conditions of the era in which the verse is interpreted. Double movement means a dual movement that analyzes current issues and then traces back to the time of revelation by examining the social life and historical events during the Prophet's life, then returns to the present.²⁹ This is done to find the ideal moral in the verse and contextualize it in the present day.³⁰ By doing so, the Qur'anic texts become more vibrant as they address the community's contemporary issues, especially in an increasingly complex modern era.

According to Fazlur Rahman, the Qur'an responds to specific situations, primarily related to moral, religious, and social statements addressing particular issues.³¹ This indicates that the historical context surrounding the Qur'an is essential to study. This initial step is crucial in the double movement study. According to Rahman, the first movement consists of two stages: first, understanding the meaning of statements by examining the historical situation or problem to which the text responds. This situation context includes both micro and macro contexts. The micro context is directed at specific situations, while the macro context encompasses societal conditions, customs, institutions, and even the life of the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the text's revelation. The first step of the first movement aims to understand the overall meaning of the text within the limits of specific teachings as a response to particular situations. Second, generalizing specific answers to make statements with general moral-social objectives. This "filtering" from specific texts is done in light of the social-historical background and logical reasoning often expressed.³²

²⁸ Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an InThe Twenty-First Century: A Centextualist Approach*, 44.

²⁹ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 5.

³⁰ Rifki Ahda Sumantri, "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Fazlur Rahman Metode Tafsir Double Movement," *Jurnal Komunika* 7, no. 1 (2013): 7-8, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24090/kom.v7i1.2013>.

³¹ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 11.

³² Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 12.

The second movement applies general views to specific views to formulate and realize them in the current conditions. General views are manifested in the current socio-historical context. Therefore, a careful study of the current situation and analysis of its various elements is needed to assess it and bring it into the present to determine new priorities and apply Qur'anic values in today's era.³³ In short, the first step of this method is to explore the compatibility of the text's meaning with the Qur'anic and Hadith contexts. The text's meaning must be studied chronologically, followed by exploring the general principles of the text through the socio-cultural context of Arab society at that time. The second movement examines contemporary society's sociological conditions based on Qur'anic or Hadith principles.

***Asbāb al-Nuzūl* as a Basis for Historical Criticism**

Asbāb al-nuzūl is derived from two words: *asbāb* and *nuzūl*. *Asbāb* is the plural form of *sabab*, meaning cause, way, origin,³⁴ reason, or motive³⁵. It implies a connection or link between one event and another.³⁶ This meaning aligns with "cause" in English, which signifies something that brings about an event. Meanwhile, *nuzūl* is a noun derived from *nazala*, meaning to descend, occupy, or move from a higher place to a lower one.³⁷ Linguistically, *asbāb al-nuzūl* refers to the reason for something descending.

Terminologically, *asbāb al-nuzūl* refers to an event that explains the revelation of a verse or surah through an incident or a question. Aḥmad 'Ādil Kamāl defines it as an event accompanied by the revelation of verses discussing the incident, explaining the law, or clarifying the situation and conditions at the time of the verse's revelation.³⁸ Ṣubḥi al-Ṣāliḥ states that *asbāb al-nuzūl* refers to an event causing the revelation of one or more verses, containing the cause, answering questions about the reason, or explaining the law during the event.³⁹ Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān similarly describes *asbāb al-nuzūl* as issues explained by Allah through the revelation of Qur'anic verses, whether an event or a response to a question.⁴⁰

³³ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 8.

³⁴ Muḥammad Idrīs Marbawī (al), *Al-Qāmus Al-Marbawī* (Kairo: Sharikat Mustafa al-Baby al-Halabi, 2006), 275.

³⁵ Aḥmad Warson Munawwir, *Al-Munawwir: Kamus Arab-Indonesia* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1997), 602.

³⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, jil. 1 (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1990), 44.

³⁷ Muḥammad Abū Shahbah, *Al-Madkhal Li Diraāsah Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Riyadh: Dār al-Liwā', 1987), 46.

³⁸ Aḥmad 'Ādil Kamāl, *Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: al-Mukhtar al-Islāmiyyah, 1997), 28.

³⁹ Ṣubḥi Ṣāliḥ (al), *Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Maṭba'ah Hijāzī, 1999), 132.

⁴⁰ Mannā' Khālil Qaṭṭān (al), *Mabāhith Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Sharika al-Muḥtadah, 1973), 78.

Muhammad ‘Alī al-Ṣābūnī discusses multiple definitions of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, with two prominent ones: the occurrence of an event prompting the revelation of a verse or several verses, or someone asking a question to the Prophet Muhammad about a religious law, resulting in the revelation of verses.⁴¹ Khālīd al-Sabt mentions two types of *asbāb al-nuzūl*: the cause of revelation not preceded by a question and the cause due to an event or in response to questions posed.⁴²

Understanding *Asbāb al-nuzūl* as a concept highlights the importance of grasping the historical context in which the verses were revealed, including the social, political, and cultural conditions at the time. This provides a strong foundation for historical criticism in interpreting the Qur’an.⁴³ Here, “criticism” refers to carefully analyzing the historical situations behind the revelation of Qur’anic verses. Understanding each verse’s historical context, a mufassir can avoid misinterpretations or overly literal readings. For instance, verses related to conflict or war must be understood within the specific historical context of the conflicts during which they were revealed, rather than as universal instructions for all times and places.⁴⁴

The importance of *Asbāb al-nuzūl* in Qur’anic interpretation is emphasized by Al-abza, who notes several perspectives.⁴⁵ Firstly, *Asbāb al-nuzūl* helps elucidate the precise and accurate meaning of Qur’anic verses. By knowing the specific situations that triggered the revelation of a verse, we can better understand Allah’s intended message. Secondly, *Asbāb al-nuzūl* aids mufassir in linking Qur’anic teachings with the social context and real-life conditions of the time, making them relevant to the current challenges and changes humanity faces.

Applying *Asbāb al-nuzūl* in Qur’anic interpretation requires expertise in analyzing historical sources and Islamic traditions. Mufassir must be able to read and comprehend classical texts related to the historical context of the Qur’anic revelations, such as the companions’ narratives and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Additionally, a command of the Arabic language and understanding Arab culture at that time are crucial.⁴⁶ Hence, *Asbāb al-nuzūl* is a critical foundation for historical criticism in Qur’anic

⁴¹ Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣābūnī (al), *Al-Tibyān Fī ‘Ulūm Al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 2003), 24.

⁴² Khālīd ‘Uthmān Sabt (al), *Qawā’id Al-Tafsīr Jam’an Wa Dirāsatan* (Kairo: Dār ibn ‘Affān, 1997), 53.

⁴³ Abnisa, “Posisi Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an Perspektif Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur,” 67.

⁴⁴ Mahbub Ghazali, “Asbab Al-Nuzul as Historical Criticisms on The Emergence of Revisionist Islam,” *Al-Turas* 26, no. 2 (2020): 277, bit.ly/buletinalturas.

⁴⁵ Al-abza, “Kritik Muḥammad Shaḥrūr Terhadap Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an,” 47.

⁴⁶ Abnisa, “Posisi Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an Perspektif Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur,” 68.

interpretation. By understanding the historical context in which the verses were revealed, we can interpret their messages more accurately and relevantly, drawing appropriate lessons from the Qur'an.

Comprehensive Study of Surah Al-Anfal, Verse 17

1. The Text of the Verse and Lexical Meaning

To begin the first movement, a detailed examination of the linguistic meaning of verse 17 in Surah al-Anfal is necessary. This aims to provide a general understanding through the interpretation of the verse. Allah's command is as follows:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتُمْ إِذْ رَمَيْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
*And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, (O Muhammad), when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.*⁴⁷

2. Vocabulary Meaning of Surah Al-Anfal Verse 17

To deepen the understanding of this verse, here are the meanings of the vocabulary from Surah al-Anfal verse 17:⁴⁸

Text	Meaning
فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ	: It was not you who killed them with your strength
وَمَا رَمَيْتُمْ	: It was not you who threw
وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ	: But Allah who conveyed your throw to them so that the disbelievers would be defeated
وَلِيُبْلِيَ	: Taken from the word <i>balā'</i> which means to test. This test is in the form of a blessing, i.e., bestowing upon them (the believers) the blessing of victory and prosperity despite their small numbers.
بَلَاءً حَسَنًا	: A blessing in the form of a good victory

3. Elaborating *Asbāb Al-nuzūl*

Here are some narrations regarding the *sabab nuzūl* (reason for revelation) of Surah al-Anfal verse 17 to understand the context of its revelation. *First*, the Battle of Badr. Narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn Zaid, it is mentioned that this verse was revealed during the Battle of Badr. The Prophet Muhammad took three pebbles and threw them at

⁴⁷ Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahan* (Tangerang: Forum Pelayan Al-Qur'an, 2017), 314.

⁴⁸ Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq bin Ghālib bin 'Atīyah Andalusī (al), *Al-Muḥaddar Al-Wajīz Fī Tafsīr Al-Kitāb Al-'Azīz*, Juz 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001), 512.

the enemies, saying, “Their faces will be deformed so that they will be defeated.” Another narration from Ibn ‘Abbas states that when the Battle of Badr raged, the Prophet told ‘Alī to fetch him a handful of sand, which ‘Alī promptly did. The Prophet then threw the sand at the faces of the enemies, and not a single enemy’s eye was spared from the sand, causing their defeat.⁴⁹

Second, the Battle of Uhud. Narrated by al-Ḥākim from Sa’īd ibn al-Musayyab, during the Battle of Uhud, Ubay bin Khalaf approached the Prophet, and people made way for him. Mus’ab bin ‘Umair confronted him, and the Prophet saw the gap between Ubay’s armor and helmet, striking him with a spear that did not draw blood but broke one of his ribs. Ubay’s companions tried to comfort him, but he insisted he would die due to the Prophet’s words, “I will kill Ubay.” Ubay died before reaching Mecca, and Allah revealed the verse (*wa mā ramaita idh ramaita wa lākinna Allāha ramā*). However, Imam al-Qurṭubī considers this narration weak, asserting that the verse was revealed shortly after the Battle of Badr.⁵⁰

Third, the Battle of Khaybar. Narrated by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Zubair, during the Battle of Khaybar, the Prophet requested a bow and shot an arrow that killed Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqaiq in his bed. Allah revealed (*wa mā ramaita idh ramaita wa lākinna Allāha ramā*). Imam al-Qurṭubī deemed this incorrect, as the conquest of Khaybar occurred long after the Battle of Uhud.⁵¹

Forth, the Battle of Hunayn. Narrated by Ibn Wahb from Mālik, during the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet threw pebbles at the enemies, and every disbeliever was hit by them. This was also narrated by Ibn al-Qāsim. *Fifth*, An Unnamed Battle. Narrated by Ibn Jarrīr from Muḥammad ibn Qays and Muḥammad ibn Ka’ab al-Qurazī, during a battle, the Prophet took a handful of sand and threw it at the enemies’ faces, causing their defeat. Another narration states that Angel Jibril told the Prophet to take a handful of earth, which he threw at the disbelievers, hitting their eyes, noses, and mouths.⁵²

Among the many narrations about the *sabab nuzūl* of Surah al-Anfal verse 17, Wahbah al-Zuhailī states that the most popular opinion among scholars is that this verse

⁴⁹ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūfī (al), *Al-Dūr Al-Manthūr Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Ma‘Thūr* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1983), 39.

⁵⁰ Suyūfī (al), *Al-Dūr Al-Manthūr Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Ma‘Thūr*.

⁵¹ Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Abī Bakr Abī ‘Abdullāh Qurṭubī (al), *Al-Jāmi’ Li Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān: Wa Al-Mubayyin Limā Taḍammanahu Min Al-Sunnati Wa Ay Al-Furqān*, juz 9 (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risālah, 2006), 968.

⁵² Qurṭubī (al), *Al-Jāmi’ Li Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān: Wa Al-Mubayyin Limā Taḍammanahu Min Al-Sunnati Wa Ay Al-Furqān*, juz 9.

was revealed when the Prophet threw a handful of sand at the polytheists during the Battle of Badr, saying, “May your faces be deformed!” The sand hit every polytheist’s eyes.⁵³ Another narration by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Ṭabarānī from Haqim bin Ḥizām mentions hearing a sound from the sky like falling pebbles during the Battle of Badr when the Prophet threw the sand. This caused their victory. Imam al-Qurṭubī adds that the throw mentioned in Surah al-Anfal verse 7 refers to the throw during the Battle of Badr, as narrated by Ibn Ishāq and is considered the most accurate, given that Surah al-Anfal was revealed in the context of Badr.⁵⁴

4. Interpretation by Contemporary Exegetes

Imam al-Ṭabarī explains the opinions of the scholars of interpretation regarding this verse. Abū Ja’far states that Allah speaks to those who believe in Him and His Messenger, those who participated in the Battle of Badr alongside the Prophet against the enemies of their faith, the disbelieving Quraish. Allah declares that He was the one who killed the polytheists, not the believers who fought hard against them. It was Allah who caused their deaths, as He commanded the believers to fight the disbelievers. This is the strongest argument against those who deny that Allah has a role in the actions and deeds of His creatures, enabling them to carry them out.⁵⁵ Imam al-Qurṭubī also mentions that Surah al-Anfal verse 17 was revealed to remind the Muslims that it is Allah who gives life and determines everything, and that humans merely strive and intend to act. This verse refutes the view held by some that human actions are created solely by themselves.⁵⁶

In his tafsir, M. Quraish Shihab seeks to present the coherence of this verse with the previous ones, which contain commands to fight and prohibitions against retreating from the enemy. Thus, it aligns with verse 17, which is set against the backdrop of the Battle of Badr. During this battle, despite the ratio of 1:3 between the Muslim forces and the Quraish, this verse emphasizes that it was Allah’s power that granted the Muslims victory over the Quraish. The victory achieved was not solely due to the efforts of the Muslims but was also influenced by Allah’s will.⁵⁷

⁵³ Wahbah Zuhailī (al), *Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fī Al-‘Aqīdah Wa Al-Sharī’ah Wa Al-Manhaj*, jil. 9 (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikri, 2009), 76.

⁵⁴ Qurṭubī (al), *Al-Jāmi’ Li Ahkām Al-Qur’ān: Wa Al-Mubayyin Limā Taḍammanahu Min Al-Sunnati Wa Ay Al-Furqān*, juz 9, 970.

⁵⁵ Abū Ja’far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī (al), *Tafsīr Jāmi’ Al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Al-Qur’an*, Juz 16 (Kairo: Dār Ḥajar, 2001), 82-83.

⁵⁶ Qurṭubī (al), *Al-Jāmi’ Li Ahkām Al-Qur’ān: Wa Al-Mubayyin Limā Taḍammanahu Min Al-Sunnati Wa Ay Al-Furqān*, 967.

⁵⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan Dan Kecerastian Al-Qur’an*, Volume 5 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 401.

Wahbah al-Zuhāīfī groups verse 17 under the theme “fleeing the battlefield and victory comes from Allah,” along with four other surahs before and after it.⁵⁸ He reveals that this group is closely related to the previous verses, teaching the believers the rules of warfare related to the Battle of Badr. In the previous verse, Allah commands them to strike the foreheads and heads, severing hands and feet. In this verse, Allah mentions a general principle of warfare, namely the prohibition of fleeing the battlefield when confronting the enemy, except as a tactic or ruse, such as feigning defeat and retreating as a trick, then launching a counterattack or joining another group to fight the enemy together. According to him, verse 17 serves as Allah’s motivation for the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims to remain steadfast and patient in the face of the enemy, as Allah’s help will surely come to grant them victory.

It was not the Muslims who killed and defeated the Quraish forces of Mecca but Allah, involving the angels in the battle and granting the Prophet Muhammad the ability to make his throw hit its mark.⁵⁹ Allah instilled fear in the hearts of the Quraish forces, desiring victory for the Muslims, strengthening their hearts, and removing fear and anxiety.⁶⁰ The phrase “it was not you who threw” does not negate the Prophet’s effort, as evidenced by the following phrase “when you threw.” According to Shihab, this phrase avoids a metaphorical understanding. But it was Allah who made the throw hit its target, leading to the Quraish’s defeat.⁶¹ Al-Qurṭubī opines that the throw mentioned refers to instilling fear and anxiety into the hearts of the Quraish. The phrase “but Allah threw” means He helped and granted victory to the Muslims.⁶²

In *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, Wahbah al-Zuhāīfī provides an extensive explanation of the above phrase’s context. It was not the Prophet Muhammad who threw sand at the Quraish forces, as his throw would only reach a humanly possible distance. Instead, Allah conveyed the sand to reach their eyes. The act of throwing originated from the Prophet, but its true effect came from Allah. The observed impact is the tangible result. Allah conveyed the throw’s effect upon them and determined their defeat. Allah influences the creation of the desired results, while humans perform the apparent actions within their capacity as assigned by Allah. As with all human efforts and daily activities, these actions do not independently

⁵⁸ Zuhāīfī (al), *Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fī Al-‘Aqīdah Wa Al-Sharī’Ah Wa Al-Manhaj*, jil. 9, 74.

⁵⁹ Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur’an*, vol. 5, 401.

⁶⁰ Zuhāīfī (al), *Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fī Al-‘Aqīdah Wa Al-Sharī’Ah Wa Al-Manhaj*, jil. 9, 76.

⁶¹ Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur’an*, vol. 5, 401.

⁶² Qurṭubī (al), *Al-Jāmi’ Li Ahkām Al-Qur’an: Wa Al-Mubayyin Limā Taḍammanahu Min Al-Sunnati Wa Āy Al-Furqān*, juz 9, 970.

achieve results and objectives without Allah's deeds and the influence He brings about. The Prophet's act of throwing sand repeated during the Battle of Hunayn.⁶³

Allah granted blessings to the Muslims. The word *liyubliya* is derived from *balā'*, meaning to test. The *lām* here serves as *lām al-'aqībah*, indicating an outcome, result, or consequence. The word *ablā'* means to bestow blessings. Initially, it means a test, but it later indicates a result, which deeply affects whoever receives it. Usually, the outcome is something negative, but not always. The test mentioned in this verse involves participating in battle, described as a good test with a good result, namely victory.⁶⁴ Hamka explains that this verse is a reminder to believers not to become arrogant when granted victory in battle. The word *minhu* (from Him) emphasizes again that this victory is a good blessing from Allah.⁶⁵ He is indeed All-Hearing of all words, including the prayers and pleas of the Prophet and the believers before the battle; and All-Knowing of their conditions and intentions, and who deserves victory and spoils of war. Allah knows how many more difficulties the Muslims will face, so the victory in this battle should not cause them to forget all of Allah's help.⁶⁶

Regarding the Battle of Badr, referred to as the day of distinction, Sayyid Quṭb offers his unique perspective, presenting six points in his argument: *first*, the Battle of Badr distinguished between truth—original righteousness that upholds the heavens and the earth and forms the basis of all things rooted in Allah's oneness—and falsehood, filled with lies and deceptions. Thus, Badr perfectly distinguished between absolute truth and excessive falsehood. *Second*, it distinguished truth and falsehood in the depths of the heart, differentiating between pure and absolute monotheism and any form of polytheism, including servitude of the heart to anything other than Allah. *Third*, it distinguished between servitude to humans, desires, laws, norms, and values, habits, and the attitude of returning everything to Allah and submitting only to His decrees. *Forth*, it marked the difference between two phases of Islamic movement history: the phase of patience, waiting, perseverance, and gathering strength, and the phase of power and movement.⁶⁷

Fifth, the Battle of Badr marked a distinction between two periods of human history, as humanity experienced differences before and after the implementation of Islamic laws. According to Sayyid Quṭb, Islamic order's influence extends beyond Muslim

⁶³ Zuḥaiḥī (al), *Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fī Al-'Aqīdah Wa Al-Sharī'ah Wa Al-Manhaj*, jil. 9, 78.

⁶⁴ Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan Dan KecerAsian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 5, 402.

⁶⁵ Hamka, *Tafsīr Al-Azhar*, jil. 4 (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1992), 2712.

⁶⁶ Hamka, *Tafsīr Al-Azhar*, jil. 4, 2713.

⁶⁷ Sayyid Quṭb ibn Ibrahīm Shazīlī (al), *Tafsīr Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5 (Kairo: Dār ibn 'Affān, 2003), 199.

countries to non-Muslim ones. It distinguished between two perspectives on victory and defeat. Outwardly, the elements of victory were on the side of the polytheists, and the elements of defeat on the side of the Muslims. However, Allah willed that the minority Muslim forces would be the victors, demonstrating that victory is not merely about weaponry but also about the strength of faith. *Sixth*, the Battle of Badr distinguished truth and falsehood with another indication. Initially, the Muslims left Medina only to intercept a caravan led by Abu Sufyan, but they ended up confronting an army led by Abu Jahl with full weaponry. Initially not intending to fight, it became a historic battle, signaling that truth will not exist and falsehood will not vanish unless falsehood is defeated by the power of truth.⁶⁸

Toward a Deeper Understanding: Analyzing the Relevance of *Asbāb Al-Nuzūl* with the Interpretation of War Verse

There are more than ten narrations discussing the reason behind the revelation of Surah al-Anfal verse 17. Some say this verse was revealed during the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Uhud, the Battle of Khaybar, and others during the Battle of Hunayn. This was mentioned by al-Wāḥidī in *asbāb al-nuzūl*. At the end of his discussion, he emphasized that the majority of exegetes believe that this verse was revealed when Prophet Muhammad threw a handful of gravel during the Battle of Badr, saying to the polytheists, “May your faces be ruined!” The Prophet threw the gravel, and not a single eye among them remained untouched by it.⁶⁹ This conclusion is also reached by Wahbah al-Zuhāīfī and Imam al-Qurṭūbī. Regarding this, Hamka in *Tafsir al-Azhar* states that the Battle of Badr was the gateway to the glory of the Muslims for the future. The victory achieved by the Muslims at the Battle of Badr determined the fate of their religion in the years to come. Thousands of Quraish soldiers were defeated by the Muslim forces, which numbered only in the hundreds.⁷⁰ This narration is also very popular among historians and forms the basis for their writings on the battles of the Prophet and the Muslim community.

Sayyid Quṭb provides an explanation in his tafsir related to the incident of the Prophet throwing sand. Here is his explanation: “It was narrated by al-Muthannā from ‘Abdullāh bin Ṣālih, from Mu’awiyah, from ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭalḥah, from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said, ‘During the Battle of Badr, Satan came among the ranks of the polytheists carrying banners, in the form of a man from the Bani Mudlij. Satan took the form of Suraqah bin

⁶⁸ Shazīfī (al), *Tafsir Fī Zīlāl Al-Qur’ān*, vol. 5, 201.

⁶⁹ Abi Al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Al-Wahidi, *Asbab Al-Nuzul* (Samtah: Dar al-Ishlah, 1992), 237.

⁷⁰ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, jil. 4, 2713.

Mālik bin Ja'sham and said to the polytheists, "No one can defeat you today, and I will protect you!" After the people were lined up, the Prophet took a handful of earth and threw it at the faces of the polytheists, causing them to flee in confusion."⁷¹

Regarding the discussion of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, based on the statement of Khālid 'Uthmān al-Sabt, who mentions two types of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, Surah al-Anfal falls into the category of events that form the background for the revelation of a verse, explaining the situation and conditions at the time the verse was revealed.⁷² As knowledge that provides an understanding of the relationship between text and reality, Surah al-Anfal verse 17 is linked to the incident of the Prophet Muhammad throwing sand at the enemy during the Battle of Badr. This verse does not serve as the cause of its revelation, thus avoiding a causal relationship. The connection between the two is of a relevant nature, mutually influencing each other. The revelation of the verse was influenced by the event of the Battle of Badr, while the verse itself was revealed to explain the ongoing event and to remind the believers to remain humble and not arrogant over their victory.

If it is claimed that there is a causal relationship between the text and the event, where the event is the cause of the text's revelation, this would be inaccurate. This assumption implies that if the event had not occurred if the Prophet had not thrown sand at the enemy during the Battle of Badr Surah al-Anfal verse 17 would not have been revealed, or its context would not be related to the event at all. In reality, the event did not automatically cause the verse to be revealed about that specific incident. Rather, Allah intended to reveal the verse at the time of the event. Even though the wording of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* narrated by scholars uses the phrase "then the word of Allah was revealed..." or similar expressions, it does not mean that Allah's word was a consequence of the event at that time. The argument that Qur'anic verses were not revealed in a cultural vacuum indicates a societal "need" for the verses as guidance. Thus, at certain traditions or events, a verse would be revealed. Even if the event prompting the revelation was not immediately clear, it can be understood that the Qur'anic verses were revealed to anticipate the circumstances during the Prophet's time.

The divine assistance in this battle, to the extent that it is said this battle was not between the Quraish of Mecca and the Muslims but rather Allah Himself, signifies a great battle. If this is true, the enemy forces could have been defeated instantly, as no person or

⁷¹ Shazifī (al), *Tafsīr Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 209.

⁷² Sabt (al), *Qawā'id Al-Tafsīr Jam'an Wa Dirāsatan*, 54.

army could overcome Allah's forces. This is conveyed by al-Ṭabaṭṭabaṭī how could a small army with few cavalry and only a few swords defeat the numerous polytheists with a large cavalry and complete armaments if not for Allah planning the victory for the Muslims.⁷³ In killing the polytheists and throwing sand at them, there is Allah's will surpassing human actions. Thus, it is not humans who created the killing and sand-throwing that blinded their vision but Allah acting through humans for that purpose. Therefore, it is not impossible for Allah to save whom He wills and to kill whom He wills.

The Battle of Badr should have been a moment of pride for the disbelieving Quraish, as they imagined. It seemed irrational for them to suffer defeat, considering their numerous forces and complete armaments. However, reality was contrary to their expectations. The battle was won by the Muslims, numbering only 313 with makeshift equipment. Looking back at the history of the Battle of Badr, the root of this conflict started with the envy and hatred of the disbelieving Quraish toward the rapidly growing power of the Prophet in Medina. Consequently, they tightened the oppression of the Muslims still residing in Mecca, not hesitating to torture and press them. They prepared a large, well-armed force to attack Medina. Before that, however, they sought sympathy and support from the non-Muslim Arab tribes around Medina. By any means, their main goal was to garner sympathy and demonstrate their unmatched power. Ultimately, despite the Quraish's meticulous preparations for the Battle of Badr, they were easily defeated by Allah's army.

Tracing Back the Journey of the Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr was the first epic battle in Islamic history, involving Muslim forces against the infidel Quraish forces from Mecca. It took place on March 17, 624 CE or 17 Ramadan 2 AH and was named Badr because of its location. In terms of weaponry and personnel, the Muslim forces were at a clear disadvantage. They numbered only 313, while the Quraish forces amounted to about 1,000 men.⁷⁴ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān Mubārakfūrī notes that the Quraish initially numbered 1,300, but 300 returned to Mecca, leaving 1,000 men.⁷⁵

This battle stemmed from the jealousy and envy of the infidel Quraish toward the Prophet's power in Medina. They increased their oppression of the Muslims still in Mecca, planning an attack on Medina. Before launching the attack, they sought support from non-

⁷³ Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabaṭṭabaṭī (al), *Al-Mizān Fi Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān*, Jilid 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1972), 97.

⁷⁴ Abdurrahman bin Abdul Karim, *Kitab Scjarah Nabi Muhammad SAW* (Yogyakarta: DIVA Press, 2013), 425.

⁷⁵ Ṣafī Al-Raḥmān Mubārakfūrī, *Al-Raḥīq Al-Makhtūm Baḥṭhu Fī Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: al-Muassasah al-Risālah, 1999), 89.

Muslim Arab tribes around Medina. One of their methods was to take the trade route to Sham, displaying their strength and spreading hatred against Muslims. This caravan was led by Abū Sufyān and guarded by 30-40 others ⁷⁶. The Prophet sent spies to verify this information, despite doubts that the Ansar would assist him. However, the Ansar firmly declared their support for the Prophet.

On the 12th of Ramadan, the Prophet, along with 313 of his companions, set out to intercept Abū Sufyān's caravan and seize the wealth it carried. Initially, the Prophet had no intention of fighting, but when Abū Sufyān became aware of their presence, he sent a messenger named Ḍamḍam bin 'Amr al-Ghiffarī to Mecca to prepare the forces ⁷⁷. The exaggerated reports by Abū Sufyān's messenger incited the anger of Abū Jahl, leading to the decision to march to Badr. Despite unfavorable conditions, the Prophet and his companions prepared to face the Quraish forces.

Upon arriving at Badr, the Quraish forces were divided. 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah argued that war should not occur as there was no evidence that Muslims had attacked Abū Sufyān's caravan. However, Abū Jahl incited them to fight, convincing 'Utbah and his family to join. The battle commenced, and in the midst of the battlefield, the Prophet prayed for victory from Allah. Despite the challenging circumstances, the Muslim forces won the Battle of Badr.⁷⁸ The Battle of Badr is not just a historical event but also a source of many lessons for Muslims. It exemplifies the power of faith, determination, and devotion to Allah. Additionally, this battle demonstrates that success is not solely determined by physical strength or the number of troops but rather by trust in Allah and earnestness in fulfilling His commands.

Contextual Understanding: Analyzing Surah al-Anfal verse 17 for the Present Day

As previously explained, Surah al-Anfal verse 17 is related to the context of war. In a micro context, as outlined in the study of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and in a macro context, it includes an examination of the socio-historical aspects such as social, cultural, economic, and political conditions at the time the verses were revealed. In the land of migration, Muslims were warmly welcomed. The arrival of the Prophet and his followers was celebrated. It was in this region that Islam first grew, not only as a religion but also as a system of governance. The Prophet successfully built and developed Islamic civilization in

⁷⁶ Akhmad Saufan, "Strategi Dan Diplomasi Perang Rasulullah," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 1 (2015): 114, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/jk.v13i1.206>.

⁷⁷ Mubārakfūrī, *Al-Raḥīq Al-Makhtūm Baḥṭhu Fī Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah*, 85.

⁷⁸ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad The Prophet* (Pakistan: Aḥmadiyah Anjuman Ishāt Islām, 1951), 110.

Medina, a society that was highly diverse. Witnessing the rapid growth of Islam in Medina, the infidels of Mecca felt threatened. They feared Islam's growing strength and its potential to change the ancestral culture of the entire Arab world from idol worship to monotheism, thus displacing the infidels. As the hatred toward Islam grew, the Meccans became more determined to destroy it by any means. By the second year of migration, Muslims were permitted and even obligated to fight the infidels to defend Islam. The Battle of Badr on 17 Ramadan 2 AH became the first battle between Muslims and the Meccan infidels. With Allah's help, the Muslims won, despite being outnumbered and poorly equipped compared to their enemies.

The victory that favored the Prophet became a sort of initial capital to build Islamic power. On the surface, it seemed impossible for the Muslims to win the battle. And with that victory, other tribes, especially those around Medina, respected the Muslims. Many of them, who were previously infidels, embraced Islam. This situation strengthened Islam and elevated the Prophet's status in Medina. Consequently, Islam grew stronger not only militarily but also politically and socially. Moreover, the battle had a spiritual impact. The faith and trust of the Muslims increased, followed by a rise in the number of Islam's followers. On the other hand, the Quraish infidels faced fear and mental weakness. Economically, the Muslims also stabilized, gaining spoils of war and wealth used by those who wanted to ransom captives.⁷⁹

Historically, the battles fought by the Prophet and the Muslims occurred under duress, compelling them to fight. The Prophet intercepting Abū Sufyān's caravan outside Medina was viewed as defiance against the Meccan infidels. However, the Prophet intended to reclaim the Muslims' rights previously seized by the Quraish. This interception, fueled by jealousy over Medina's progress under the Prophet's leadership, became the perfect excuse for the Quraish infidels to wage war against the Muslims (Elhany, 2014). From this event, a concrete moral ideal can be drawn that war is permissible in emergencies. Quoting Misbakhul Khaer, Wahbah al-Zuhāīfī explains that the Prophet's declaration of war was a legal option for spreading Islam, aimed at defending human rights, such as the right to live safely and peacefully, obtain protection, fair treatment, freedom of action, and respect.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Muhammad Zulfahar Hilmi Rahmadani, "Pengaruh Perang Badar Terhadap Eksistensi Kaum Muslim Di Madinah" (UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2019), 50-58.

⁸⁰ Misbakhul Khaer, "Etika Dan Hukum Perang Pada Masa Peperangan Nabi Muhammad SAW," *Qolamuna* 2, no. 1 (2016): 7.

Beyond these purposes, any form of war is not permissible in Islam, as jihad fundamentally aims to uphold truth, honor, and peace.

In modern times, the concept of war tends more towards non-physical jihad or battle, which does not involve actual warfare. Modern society prioritizes intellectual and individual or group credibility improvement, community welfare through economic and educational equality, eradicating corruption, and other similar actions rather than fighting enemies of Islam with complete weaponry. The article “Violence and Jihad in Islam: From the War of Words to the Clashes of Definitions” explains that the term *jihad* or war carries various meanings including jihad through words, power, and good deeds. It emphasizes that in many cases, jihad does not refer to physical warfare but rather to a life struggle encompassing internal, social, and intellectual dimensions.⁸¹ However, in the context of “war” defined as the struggle and resistance to societal norms or the like, contextualizing war with this meaning can be realized. It is essential to note that the wars faced by Muslims today vary, such as ideological wars, political wars, trade wars, cyber wars on social media, and industrial wars from the West. Although these forms of warfare do not resemble cavalry battles, bombings, and sword fights on vast battlefields, they fundamentally produce the same impact and consequences. Thus, such actions should not be taken unless in emergencies. Warfare of this era encompasses personal and social struggles for the common good—including spiritual, intellectual, and political dimensions that emphasize justice and peace.⁸²

Ideological and socio-political wars do not only occur between Muslims and non-Muslims but also among Muslims themselves. For example, in European countries, even in modern times, manifestations of racism against Muslims frequently occur in various forms. From individual cases where Muslims struggle to find housing or employment due to their name, appearance, and origins, to community issues where Muslim communities are banned from building mosques and so on. Especially for hijab-wearing women in Germany, France, and Ukraine, they are highly vulnerable to racism, facing insults and harassment. Faced with such unjust actions, Muslims must resist in good ways for the sake of their religion. For instance, significantly seeking protection under European law. By relying on the

⁸¹ Ali Mostfa, “Violence and Jihad in Islam: From the War of Words to the Clashes of Definitions,” *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 11, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110966>.

⁸² Ledian Purnanda Uin, Yoven Jonivan, and Nurlaili, “Konsep Jihad Dalam Islam,” *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 9, no. 3 (2024): 8, <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v9i3.19759>.

strength of European law, which applies to everyone regardless of race and religion, discrimination against Muslims can at least be reduced.

Among Muslims themselves, for example, is what happens to Sunni Muslims in Iran. In several of Iran's poorest provinces, predominantly Sunni Muslim areas such as Sistan and Baluchistan, the population there systematically faces harmful discrimination. Economically, none of the income from the extraction of the country's natural resources flows to these provinces. In politics and governance, Sunnis in Iran are not allowed to hold any significant political office; they cannot become president or head of the judiciary, nor do they have the right to sit on the Supervisory Board, establish political parties, or even build institutions that publish newspapers or magazines. Opinion articles voicing the injustices of the Shia regime against Sunnis are immediately boycotted, and their authors are sought out and detained. To combat the oppression of Muslims' rights to equal treatment in national life, resistance against such injustices becomes a primary obligation.

Another simpler example in the Indonesian context is the presidential and vice-presidential election process in 2024 a few months ago. Supporters of the candidate pairs 01 (Anies-Muhaimin), 02 (Prabowo-Gibran), and 03 (Ganjar-Mahfud) launched strategies to gather as much mass support as possible. Fanatical groups often attacked those with different choices, either frontally or through digital content on various social media platforms. Hate speech and ridicule, accompanied by photos of the individuals or certain party logos, seem to be commonplace in the political constellation of this country, especially during election times. It often triggers unrest in certain places, such as the removal of banners, the burning of billboards with candidate images, the destruction of public facilities suspected of being politically influenced, and so on. In this context, jihad can be controlling oneself not to be influenced by external phenomena and instilling patience within oneself. However, when one feels extremely oppressed and relates it to faith, resistance is necessary to voice the truth. The election issue extends to disputes over results suspected of being fraudulent in the vote-counting process. Some experts believe this must be thoroughly investigated and brought to the constitutional court for a decision, as it is considered to undermine democratic principles. Such resistance is akin to contemporary warfare, namely fighting for democratic rights for the nation's integrity, which is seen as tarnished by irresponsible elements in the case of alleged fraud in electing the president and vice-president of Indonesia.

Next, when war cannot be redefined from its literal meaning involving physical combat, it means battle, Muslims are compelled to fight against injustice to defend their

faith, adhering to the ethical codes of war. For instance, not indiscriminately killing non-combatants like civilians, the elderly, and children, not killing animals, not taking hostages, not inflicting inhumane torture, not destroying public facilities, and not causing environmental damage. If Muslims engage in such acts, jihad can turn into a terrorist movement. In contemporary times, this is relevant to the fight against Western industrialization. Considering the technological advancements, political influences, and international economic impacts, it is not an exaggeration to say that Muslims today remain oppressed by Western hegemony. Moreover, the deceptive ideologies launched to sow discord among Muslims have intensified since the recruitment of leaders of Muslim countries by the United States to join the coalition against terrorism.

In Indonesia, the second-largest Muslim country after Pakistan, its population finds it hard to escape Western imperialism's grip. Although not in the form of direct war-like colonialism seen in Palestine with Israel, it is replaced by the infiltration of Western ideological, economic-political, and socio-cultural values into the daily practices of Muslim communities. Numerous Western elements, rather than developing, actually undermine the pillars of Indonesian Muslim society and other Islamic countries, especially regarding faith and morals. If Muslims do not want to be continually trapped in Western colonialism, jihad becomes an inevitable duty, carried out in beneficial ways. It is certainly not easy to weigh how to fight Western hegemony and the advanced globalization as it stands today. One must consider that outright rejection of Western industrialization and reverting to the past when the Prophet lived would leave Islam perpetually behind and unable to match the West in global dominance. However, fully accepting Western values would erode Islamic teachings and eventually make them disappear. Muslims would lose their critical stance towards Western culture, leaning towards validating Western products created so far. Thus, the appropriate attitude in fighting Western dominance is filtering the incoming Western values and adapting them to Muslim needs. For instance, integrating Western thoughts into Islamic research to create Muslim academics capable of rational thinking, democratic attitudes, and living amid today's modernity.

On a transcendental level, this verse contains extraordinary wisdom, suggesting that being a Muslim means having faith and trusting in Allah. For Allah can make possible what seems impossible to humans. Muslims should always fulfill their obligations responsibly and entrust everything to Allah. The outcomes and achievements are left to Allah, not human strength and capability. Furthermore, the teaching is about sincerity in jihad, steadfastness against enemies, and involving Allah in every action. All these lead to Allah's

pleasure towards the people of Badr and the blessings bestowed upon them, such as victory, war spoils, rewards, and a glorious future for the faith. However, it must be realized that these great blessings from Allah are also a test or trial for Muslims. Will they remain obedient to Allah by increasing gratitude and continuously doing good, or will they become negligent and turn away from piety?

The transcendental approach to understanding this verse leads to a deeper understanding of the relationship between human will and Allah's decree. In daily life, humans are given the freedom to choose their paths, set their life goals, and strive to achieve them with all their might. However, in the transcendental dimension, it is reminded that all human efforts are subject to Allah's will and decree. Allah is All-Knowing and All-Powerful, and only He has absolute control over everything. This verse teaches that in every effort, whether in war or other aspects of life, humans must be aware of their limitations and always rely on Allah. The success in the Battle of Badr, as indicated in this verse, was not merely due to the strategy and bravery of the Muslim fighters but more because of Allah's help that weakened their enemies. This provides an important lesson that behind every victory and success, there is Allah's hand at work, even though human efforts also play a role.

In the transcendental dimension, this concept also teaches about *tawakal*, which is full trust and surrender to Allah after making the best effort. Humans may plan and strive, but the final result is left to Allah. This fosters humility and prevents humans from being arrogant and feeling that all success is purely the result of their hard work. In the context of war, it also fosters the attitude of not giving up easily if the desired results are not achieved, as they realize that Allah has a better plan. Furthermore, contextualizing this verse in modern life reminds that amid various challenges and conflicts, whether on a large scale like wars or daily struggles, humans must always remember Allah's decree. This creates the awareness that there is a greater power governing everything, and humans must always be patient, trustful, and continue to strive within their capabilities.

In terms of morals and ethics, this verse also teaches about Allah's justice and wisdom. That all human deceit and evil plans are weak before Allah's power. This provides reassurance for believers that justice will ultimately be upheld by Allah, and no wrongdoing escapes His sight. This fosters optimism and courage to continue fighting for truth and justice, knowing that Allah is always with those who strive in His path. Spiritually, this verse calls people to always draw closer to Allah, pray, and seek His help in every endeavor. Awareness of human limitations and Allah's absolute power makes humans wiser in

decision-making and calmer in facing various situations. Those who understand the transcendental meaning of this verse will always prioritize values of faith and piety in every step they take.

Based on the analysis outlined above, Surah al-Anfal verse 17 not only provides guidance on strategy in the context of warfare but also conveys a transcendental message about the relationship between human freedom and Allah's decree. It teaches the importance of trust in Allah, justice, calmness in facing trials, and the belief that Allah is the ultimate determiner of all human efforts. By understanding this verse transcendently, humans can live more wisely, humbly, and always depend on Allah in every situation.

D. Conclusion

The majority of scholars agree that Surah al-Anfal was revealed during the Battle of Badr, relating to the event where the Prophet Muhammad threw sand at the enemy forces. In the context of war, this verse speaks about Allah's motivation to the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims to remain steadfast and patient in the face of the enemy, the glad tidings of the Muslims' victory over the Quraish forces, and the warning not to be arrogant over the blessings bestowed by Allah. The revelation of this verse was prompted by the events of the Battle of Badr, while the verse itself explained the ongoing events and simultaneously warned the believers to remain humble and not arrogant over the achieved victory.

This study finds that Surah al-Anfal verse 17 contains multidimensional messages encompassing historical, socio-political, ethical, and transcendental aspects. From the historical context, this verse is directly related to the Battle of Badr, which was a response to the real threats and pressures from the Quraysh polytheists against the Muslim community in Medina. Through the approach of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and historical analysis, the researcher demonstrates that warfare in this context was a form of defense for the existence, human rights, and justice of Muslims. Another finding reveals that the concept of jihad should not be narrowly understood as physical warfare but also includes non-violent struggles in modern contexts, such as fighting social injustice, discrimination, ideological domination, and political or economic inequality—both globally (e.g., Western hegemony) and domestically (e.g., sectarian political disparities or electoral competition). Spiritually, the verse teaches values such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), awareness of human limitations, and belief in divine decree. The victory in the Battle of

Badr was not merely the result of human strategy but represented divine intervention as a manifestation of faith and sincere struggle. This provides an essential lesson that in every human effort, the role of God is the ultimate determinant of success. Thus, the verse is not only relevant to historical circumstances but also carries universal ethical and spiritual principles such as justice, the protection of rights, and the pursuit of peace, which can be wisely and contextually applied in facing contemporary challenges of the Muslim community.

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